THE THIRD DAY.

1st March, 1922.

The Assembly met at 11-35 A. M. on Wednesday, 1st March 1922.

9. Granting of copies of records from Revenue Offices.

Mr. Devan Krishnaru (Member, Jenmi, Quilon Division) said that the rules recently issued by Government for the grant of copies of records from revenue offices were causing great hardship to the people. He complained of the increase in the rate of copying fees from 2¼ chs. to 3½ chs. per page, of the failure of the revenue subordinates to return unused copying sheets produced by parties, and of the absence of uniformity in the several taluks in the matter of the number of survey numbers in a *chitta* to be copied on a single page. Two, three and five survey numbers to a page were being copied in different taluks. The Member attributed the irregularities to the non-introduction of the fixed salary system in the case of the revenue copyists, as in the case of the copyists in the civil courts. The revenue officers were insisting on the production of court certificates along with applications for copies. They also often refused copies on the ground that the grant of the copies would be prejudicial to the interests of Government. He, therefore, made the following suggestions to remove the evils complained of :—

(1) Copyists in revenue offices should be given a fixed pay, as in the case of the copyists in civil courts.

(2) The production of certificates from courts and other offices along with applications for copies should not be insisted on.

(3) When copies of *chittas* are applied for, the same number of survey numbers as are contained in the original *chittas* should be ordered to be entered in the copies granted to the parties.

Dewan's reply.—You complain about the revised rules. It is with a view to secure uniformity and prevent the possibility of fraud and malfeasance that stamp papers have been introduced in lieu of fees in cash. You say that in some offices the copyists enter only two survey numbers on a page, in some other offices three, and in some others five. The rule is that on each sheet there should be 175 words and this rule has only to be enforced. If any copyist or officer breaks the rule, a complaint should be brought against him. You talk of a certificate. I do not know of any rule which insists on a certificate. There is a rule to the effect that copies of correspondence should not be given. Copies of orders, public accounts and other public records should not be refused merely because they would be helpful to parties in litigation. No officer should refuse to give copies of public records on the ground of a possible litigation against Government. If any officer has done it, he has used his discretion wrongly. That again is a matter for specific complaint. The reason why we have not adopted the fixed salary system in regard to revenue copyists is that, in revenue courts, the amount of copying work that has to be done is very small compared to the work in civil courts. In the latter there is full time work for one or more copyists, whereas, in the revenue courts, there cannot be ordinarily full-time work for a copyist. It is, therefore, not possible to appoint revenue copyists on the permanent salary system. Another complaint made by you relates to the non-return of unused stamp papers. There is a register in which the number of sheets presented, the number used, and the number returned have to be entered, and the initials of the party obtained in token of return of the unused stamp papers. If complaints are made in the case of any breach of rules on the part of the officers concerned, they will be duly enquired into.

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